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Michigan
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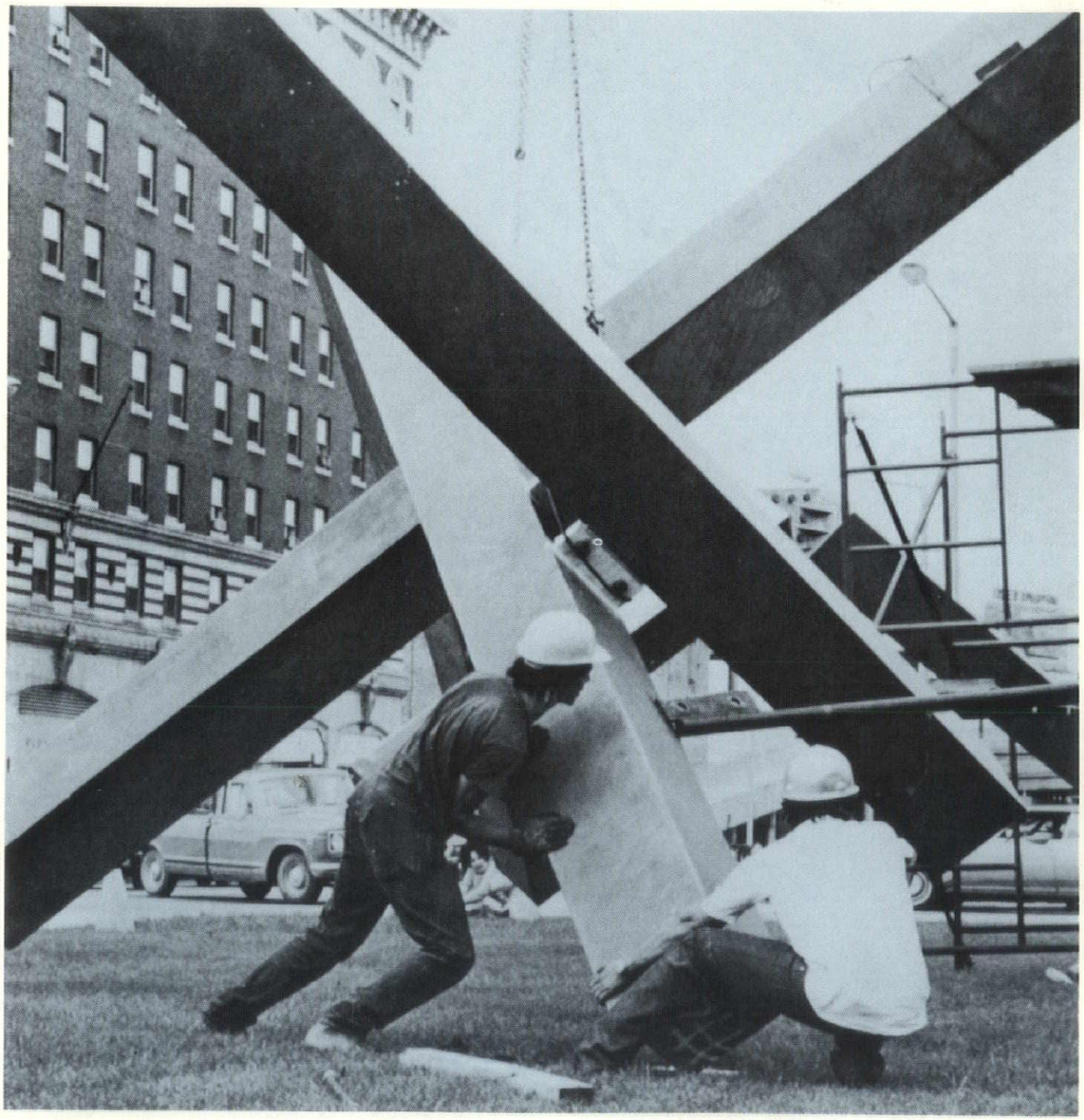

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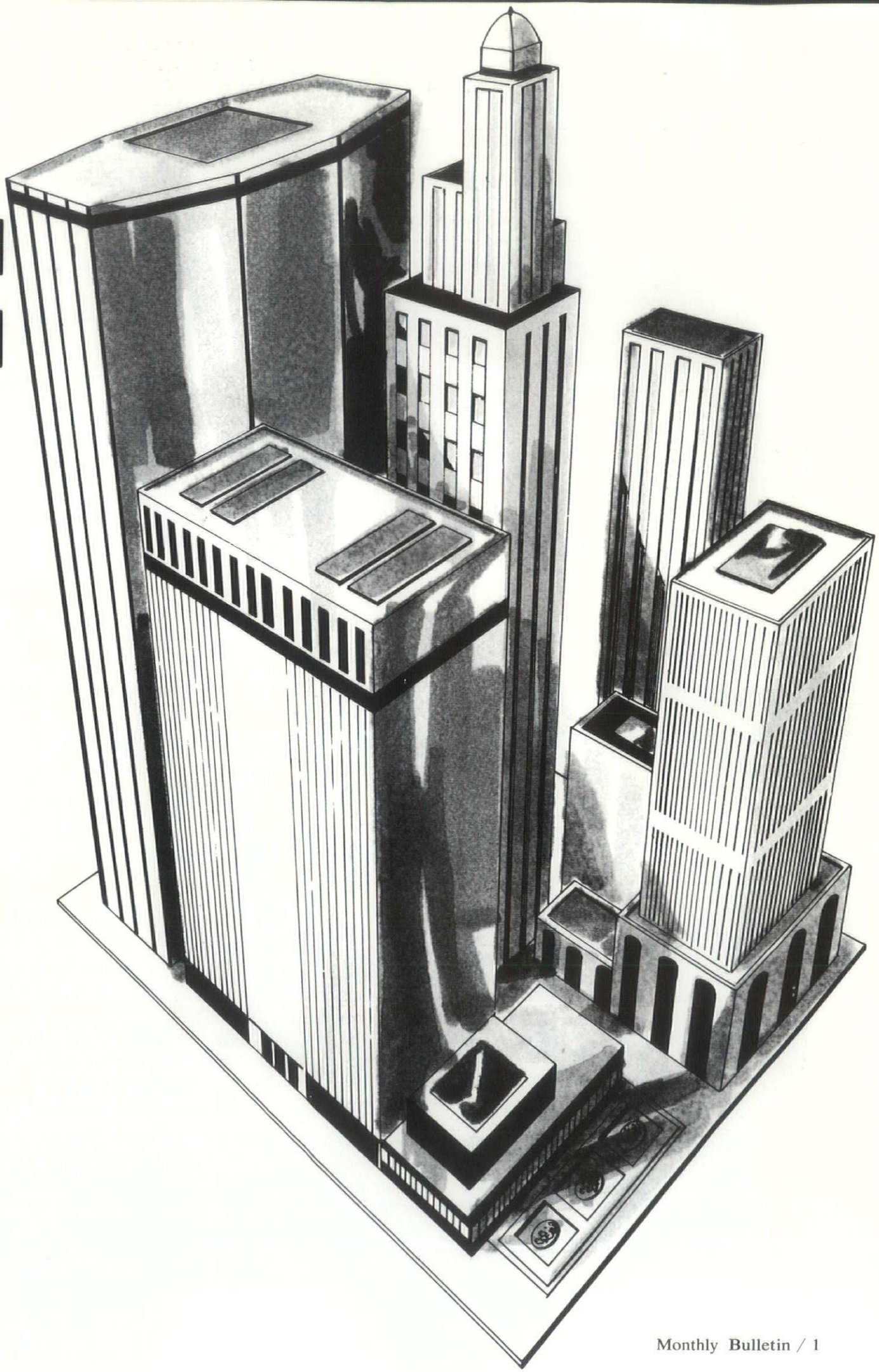

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Monthly Bulletin

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Contents

4- 7 Getting Off-The-Pedestal
. . . On The Pedestal

9 Personal Architecture

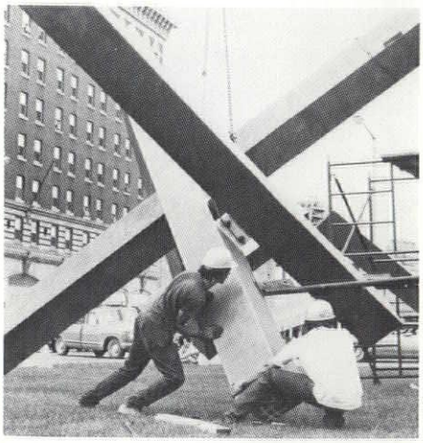
10-12 MSA News

14-15 MSA 59th Annual Convention
Exhibitors Prospectus

16 Letters

16 Classified

16 Advertisers Index



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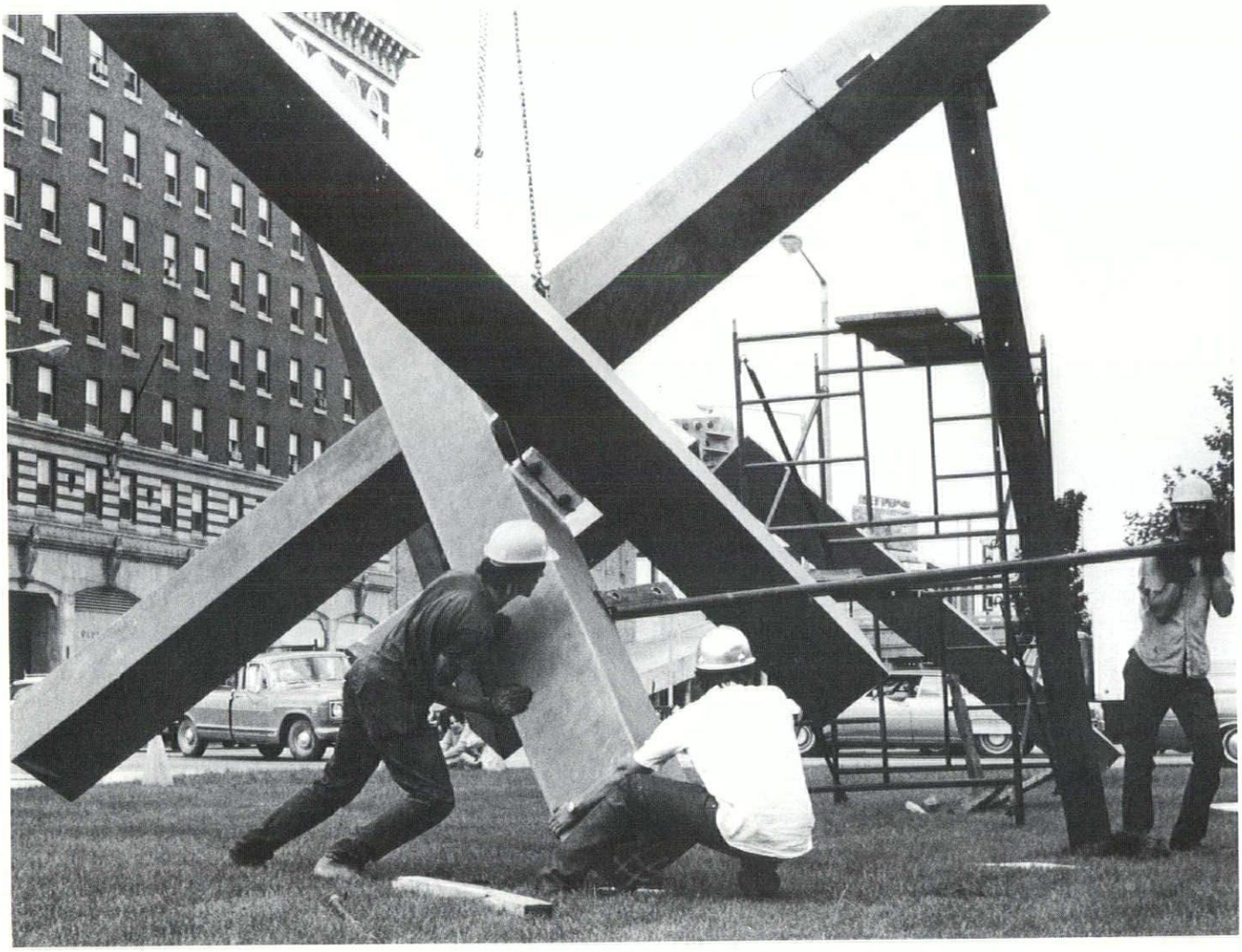
Getting Off-The-Pedestal . . .



On The Pedestal

by Tom Seidman

Photos by Steve Fryckholm, Jim Hansen & The Grand Rapids Press

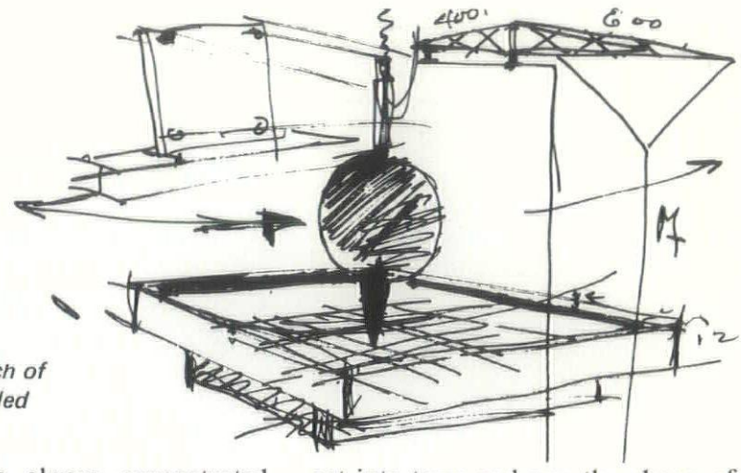
It was an undertaking that seemed, in the beginning, to be just this side of totally ridiculous. Take a dozen of the country's finest sculptors. Ask each to supply, free of charge, one of his best works. Place these pieces in strategic positions on a conservative midwestern business plaza. Have this done under the auspices of the Women's Committee of the Art Museum, a group whose most visible function to date has been to act as storekeeper for The Gallery Shop. And do it all for less than $20,000, a figure just slightly more than one-tenth the cost of any comparable exhibit.

It has been done. In Grand Rapids.

The genesis of the show had come months earlier; an idea discussed over drinks by an art professor, a museum director and an artist. A research committee narrowed down the field of potential contributing sculptors to 14. Thirteen responded, a vote of confidence which both stunned and encouraged everybody. The city commission was wooed and won, artists were flown in from New York for site selection, and matching federal funds came through from the National Foundation of the Arts. Enthusiasm and naivete ran high. Said the president of one large company soon pressed into service, "The biggest problem they had was that they didn't understand the installation of these pieces. You just don't roll them off the truck and stand them up." Jerry Hazard of the Women's Committee admits they were proceeding on blind faith at the time. "They (the artists) and we thought we were all set. We weren't."

The plaza itself presented the first obstacle. The entire area provides a roof for the underground parking garage, but its designers had not contemplated the load pressure generated by multi-ton art works. Placed on a structurally unsupported section, Mefford's "Projection Tower" could suddenly become an unwanted hood ornament on the mayor's car. The ladies called in Paul Newhof, of the structual engineering firm of Newhof-Winer, who explained the problem:

"Most of those plazas are made with beams, columns and concrete slabs, and the plaza itself is designed for a certain load per square foot. The pieces always sit on two or three or four legs or points,



Working sketch of Eldred's untitled pendulum.

so there are always concentrated loads, and these are usually in excess of the capacity of the plaza. This might be two or three thousand pounds. You have to be a little careful where you put this two or three thousand pounds. Sometimes, if it's out in the middle of a slab span, it gets a little dangerous. But if it's in the middle of a column or a beam or a girder you're all right. So that's what we did—actually checked the capacity of the plaza in positioning the unit so it was safe. They said 'Hey, it's going to go in the southwest corner of the plaza.' So we told them where to put it so that it sits over adequate framing."

Wind velocities also had to be considered. While Grand Rapids is not known for its hurricane intensity gales, a 21 foot aluminum tower sent tottering by a sudden gust can cause considerable damage to sidewalks, shrubbery and unsuspecting pedestrians. Paul Newhof was called again.

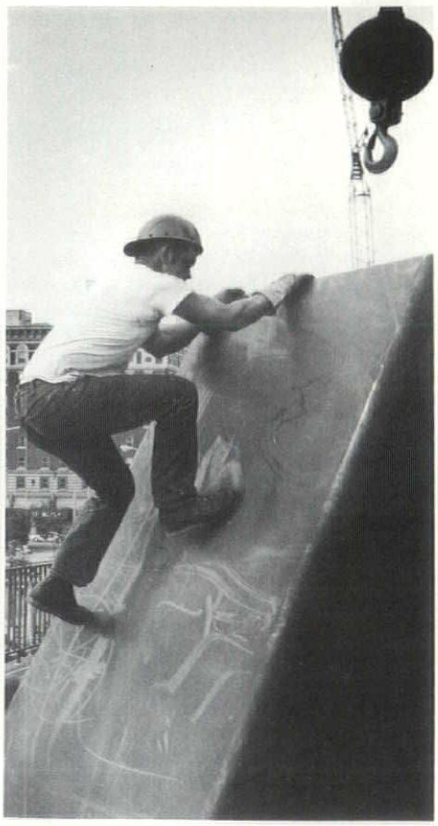
"You can't fasten it to the plaza," he told them, "they won't let you do that because of the permanent damage it would do. If you want to set them on the plaza you have to come up with some kind of foot. It doesn't look particularly good but that's about the best we can do—just take a big piece of steel plate and fasten it down."

Dick Sedlecky, head of a local concrete casting firm, tackled the job of anchoring Michael Hall's massive "Sundance."

"We had to develop enough weight in concrete to hold the thing down so it wouldn't blow away, and at the same time we had to make it so it would be portable enough to get in there. We worked all hours of the day and night trying to get the mold work done. We finally got to pouring the thing and, after Michael got into town and saw the shape of the big ones, they were a little bit too massive for him. We had to modify the darn thing. He wanted to know what he could do, so we kicked it around and came up with a wider piece and a lower profile. When he got all done with it he was extremely pleased. He felt that the stuff that we put in there, which was intended just to hold the thing down, actually contributed something to the appearance."

Not all the sculptors were so fortunate. One artist, whose piece required a massive steel plate base, was heard muttering that it was

The Haven-Busch crane crew, reluctant recruits on the first day of work, asked to come back on the second.



"like putting cement boots on a dancing girl." The city insisted, and the bases stayed.

The lines of communication and cooperation soon extended far beyond the city limits. The exact placement of Robert Murray's "Windhover" necessitated a number of long distance telephone calls to the artist who was camped on a remote Canadian island for the summer. The telephone operator would board his power boat, locate Murray, report the sculpture's current position, and then motor back to the telephone to convey Murray's recommendations.

A Montana ceramics student, passing through Michigan on his way to school in Pennsylvania, heard of the show and stopped to investigate. He stayed for two weeks. By the time the exhibit opened he had been offered an apprenticeship by sculptor John Henry and was headed for the artist's studio in Chicago.

Sculptor Mark Disuvero was working in Europe and was unable to attend the show himself, but he insisted that only one man in America was capable of supervising the reconstruction of his "After Years What?", a massive configuration of steel I-beams weighing 16 tons. The man was located in Denver, Colorado, and was duly flown in for the duration.

No one was quite sure what to do with Dale Eldered's untitled pendulum. While the piece itself consists of a relatively simple ball-and-point swaying over a 10 foot sandbox, the entire pendulum had to be suspended from the upper reaches of City Hall a breathtaking proposition. Paul Newhof, who by this time wore the harried expression of a man asked to do the impossible eight hours a day, was a little worried:

"You're taking these two pieces to the top, which is 130 or 140 feet up, putting them together and then trying to get them out over the edge of the roof while you're hanging onto the other end and clamping it down, all at the same time. Once it's out there, it's no problem; but getting it there is where it gets to be a little tough, because it sticks out further than it sticks back and so it doesn't balance. Its heaviest end is out over the edge of the building. It's a hazardous time because if you lose it, you're going to break windows or marble facing or something."

John Nammensma, a partner in the blacksmith shop of Ebling & Son, took on the job of constructing the support beam.

"It was built in two sections; one was 15 feet long and one was 23 feet long and 23 feet were going to hang over the edge of the building. They didn't know how they were going to get it out there. Eldred had one idea and the architect had another. Eldred wanted to put a beam out there, and they wouldn't go along with that, so they brought me a blueprint of what they thought they should have and then we worked from there. They took it up in two sections, put it on the roof, bolted it together, and we put about three guys on one end and swung it out over the building. There are two sets of rails that a window washer apparatus works on and its bolted up there, onto those tracks.

"It works real nice. The idea is the movement of the wind makes this thing go around and you get different patterns. It's really interesting. It's something besides something just hanging there and looking massive. It works."

As the official opening of the show approached, activity at Vandenburg Center and elsewhere became increasingly frenzied. Dick Sedlecky had also donated space and equipment for sandblasting John Henry's "Landscape No. 4," and he soon found himself managing a full-time sculpture crew. "As soon as we got some of the pieces done we would throw them on the truck and take them downtown. We didn't take each piece individually—we'd blast two or three pieces and get enough for John to work on for awhile. Some guys were blasting while some were assembling—we were going in all directions. We've got two of his pieces that we couldn't use out there yet."

Even the artists who had been passively supervising plunged into the last minute preparations. The bricklayer who was to complete John Mason's "Firebrick Sculpture '73" was robbed two days before the opening, and Sunday morning, Mason could be found on his hands and knees in front of the Hall of Justice, completing the masonry

Preparing the steel plate bases . . . "Like putting cement boots on a dancing girl."

himself. Dale Eldred flew into town, examined the work completed so far, and requested in quick succession a pick-up truck, a flatbed semi, a welder and an aluminum coffin hoist. The business community had by this time come to expect frantic phone calls from the Women's Committee, and the items were soon on their way. Haven-Busch president Jack Busch smiled when he recalled the last-minute requests. "We told our people around here, 'From now on we're going to get all the expediting in our plant done by females because it seems to go much faster.'"

Throughout and despite all this confusion, everyone involved seemed to be having the time of their lives. The Gallery Shop girls were everywhere, scrubbing and painting and shouting encouragement. The Haven-Busch crane crew, reluctant recruits on the first day of work, asked to come back on the second. Normally aloof sculptors worked side by side with carpenters and electricians and, more surprisingly, with each other. A carnival atmosphere prevailed. One painter, happily dangling from an upper angle of the Disuvero, was heard to remark, "If I could do this kind of work all the time, I'd work for nothing."

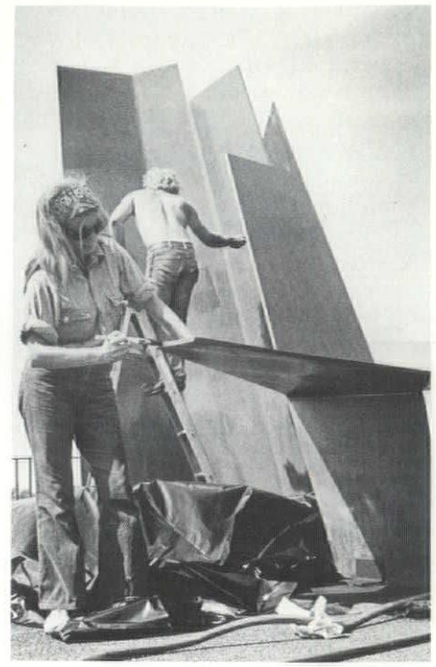
It has been several weeks now since the opening. The work has been completed. The sculptors have returned home, complete with newly received keys to the city, apparently well pleased with the exhibit. One was reportedly having a holster made from his key. Another has offered to construct a new work for the city free of charge.

Their sculptures remain, the objects of derision, praise or puzzlement. A downtown businessman regarded Urry's "Arch" and remarked that "someone ought to get married under it." (When Urry heard of the comment he was delighted.) Another passerby grumbled that Antonakos' cubical "Room" would make a good ticket booth. Other less complimentary comments like "junk" and "garbage" have been bantered about freely.

But the show has also ilicited praise and even a grudging respect. "You gotta get down there about two or three times," John Nammensma observed, "and really look at them to appreciate them. Because you know a lot of people in town say 'Gee, all this iron hanging up here, what is it?' You gotta figure it's from somebody's mind, regardless if it's an automobile or a piece of art. It's all the way you look at it."

Perhaps we can all take a hint from the crane operator who installed the Calder. "When I first seen it," he says, "I didn't understand it. I still don't but I like it better."

Reprinted with permission from Accent—Grand Rapids, October 1973.



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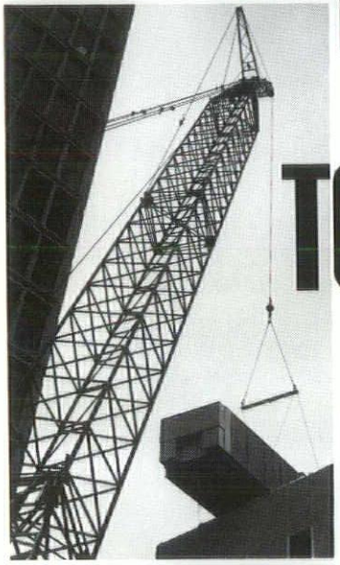
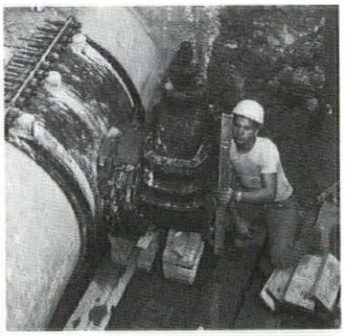


TOOLS OF THE TRADE



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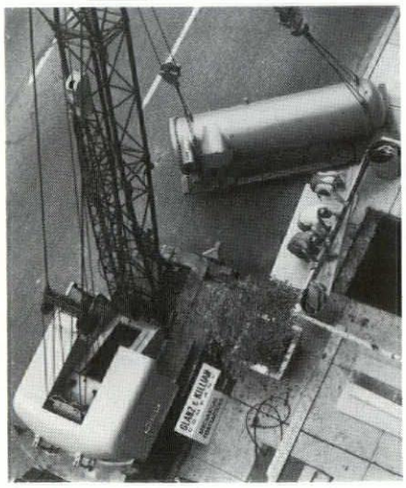

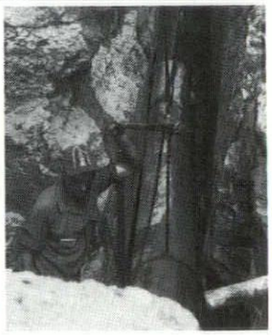

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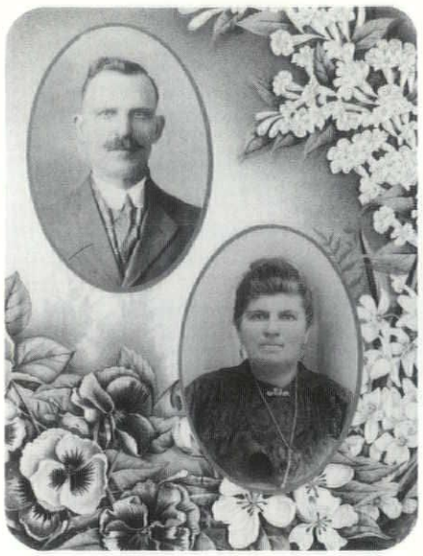


Personal Architecture

Forty years ago, my grandfather, Valentine Falzon, an immigrant limestone cutter from the island of Malta found himself in the midst of the depression and among the army of unemployed. With time on his hands and possesing endless energy and native creative ingenuity, he and his family began construction of a cottage that has been affectionately called the "stone castle" by local residents near Lexington, Michigan.

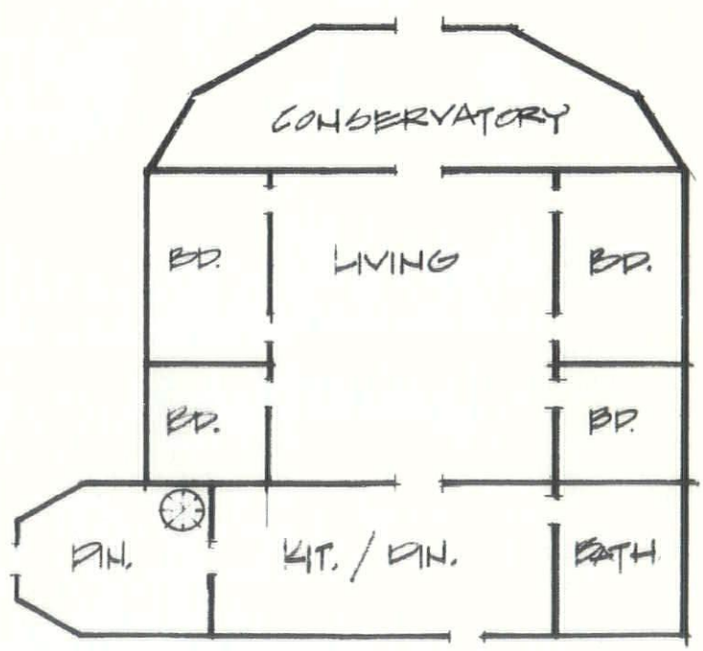
Located conviently within 800 feet of Lake Huron's stoney shoreline, the 20 foot stone hauling climb from the beach was, nevertheless guite a challange. As the stones were prepared, the mortar was mixed by hand, a wheelbarrow at a time. The stones withing the walls were laid during the day in 2 foot vertical sections within forms (the reach of a man's arm) and allowed to set. The forms were pulled and the stones cleaned at two in the morning to await the next days work.

The ornament which surrounds the building also consists of stones and mortar. Formwork for the various rails, pots and decorative replicas is a study in the unconventional. Balcony rails, for example, are made of discarded cast-iron radiator sections and the windows in the scaled-down leaning tower replicas at the entrance were formed of potatoes cut from a hand fashioned cookie-cutter. The potato sections would shrink after a few days and could easily be removed, thus eliminating damage to the stone work and mortar of the towers.

The interior is as much an example of sensitive craftsmanship as is the outside. Every ceiling within the exposed stone walls has its share of 32,000 mosaic (tiles), each laid in a different pattern. The tiles were cut by hand from discarded produce crates, hand fashioned in geometric shapes and nailed in place.

Subtle differences in color were attained thru the alternating use of weathered and unweathered wood.

Douglas Falzon
Class of 1973, University of Michigan
College of Architecture and Design



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American Arbitration Association

The American Arbitration Association is a private, non-profit organization, dedicated to the resolution of disputes swiftly, inexpensively, and without unnecessary procedural problems.

The majority of the American Arbitration Association's caseload falls into the areas of labor, commerical disputes, or injury claims involving uninsured motorist accidents. Such cases might involve: Disputes between an owner, contractor and architect over delays in the construction of a multi-million dollar apartment complex; Former business partners disputing the division of assets upon the dissolution of their partnership; Disagreements between an employer and a union over proper employee grooming standards; Injury claims resulting from an accident involving one or more uninsured motorists; Disputes involving a landlord and a tenant over rent, terms of the lease or remodeling of the facilities.

In addition to its primary work of administering disputes, the Association is involved in other community services as well. A seperate department of the Association administers elections. For example, many leaders of labor or community organizations, although otherwise very capable, may have little skill in conducting elections. They may also wish to have the whole matter handled by the Association to protect the election against later charges of irregularity.

Two recent grants totaling $50,000 from Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the Commonwealth Fund will enable the Association to develop and install a health care dispute mechanism in the Detroit area. This innovative program is designed to not only settle but prevent such health care points of contention as community representation in hospital boards, staff privileges and consumer and staff complaints.

Another new development is the National Center for Dispute Settlement, a division of the American Arbitration Association, which has recently entered the field of arbitrating minor criminal cases. These cases normally involve alleged property damage or assult and battery. Cities employing the concept of arbitration instead of litigation in monor criminal cases have reported a reduction of nearly 20 percent in private criminal warrent hearings in their municipal courts.

A National Center for Dispute Settlement offers a wide variety of other services as well. Among these community-oriented services are: The design of procedures for landlord/tenant arbitration and mediation in both public and private housing; The settlement of community-based disputes as well as those on college and high school campuses; The development of systems for the arbitration of consumer complaints; The mediation of public employment disputes; The design of extensive training programs, including urban awareness which focuses on conflict resolution techniques for local community groups and institutions.

Design Professions Issue Joint Statement on Contributions

Seven organizations of design professionals, architects, engineers, landscape architects, and planners, reemphasized their "responsibility to discipline their members for unprofessional conduct."

A strongly worded statement expressing their dismay at recent allegations of improper, or patently illegal, conduct by design professionals seeking contracts for public works was signed by the presidents of the seven professional societies. It was written at a meeting in Washington of the International Council on Environmental Design, attended by officers representing the environmental design professions.

Pointing out that "the vast majority of design professionals practice in a legal and ethical manner," the joint statement said:

"We condem without equivocation any attempt by any person dealing with Government to influence the award of contracts through political contributions or by offering, or providing services, materials

or other gratuities in the hope of obtaining work."

"Equally, we deplore the political pressures exerted on individuals and firms to make contributions in order to be considered 'preferred contractors' for services in connection with public work," it added.

The seven organizations went on record as strongly supporting legislation for limitation and full public disclosure of all political contributions and recommended enactment of laws that would make improper conduct by design professionals grounds for suspension of licenses by state registration boards.

The organizations that make up the Interprofessional Council on Environmental Design are the American Consulting Engineers Council (ACEC), American Institute of Architects (AIA), American Institute of Planners (AIP), American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE), American Society of Consulting Planners (ASCP), American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA), and National Society of Professional Engineers (NSPE).

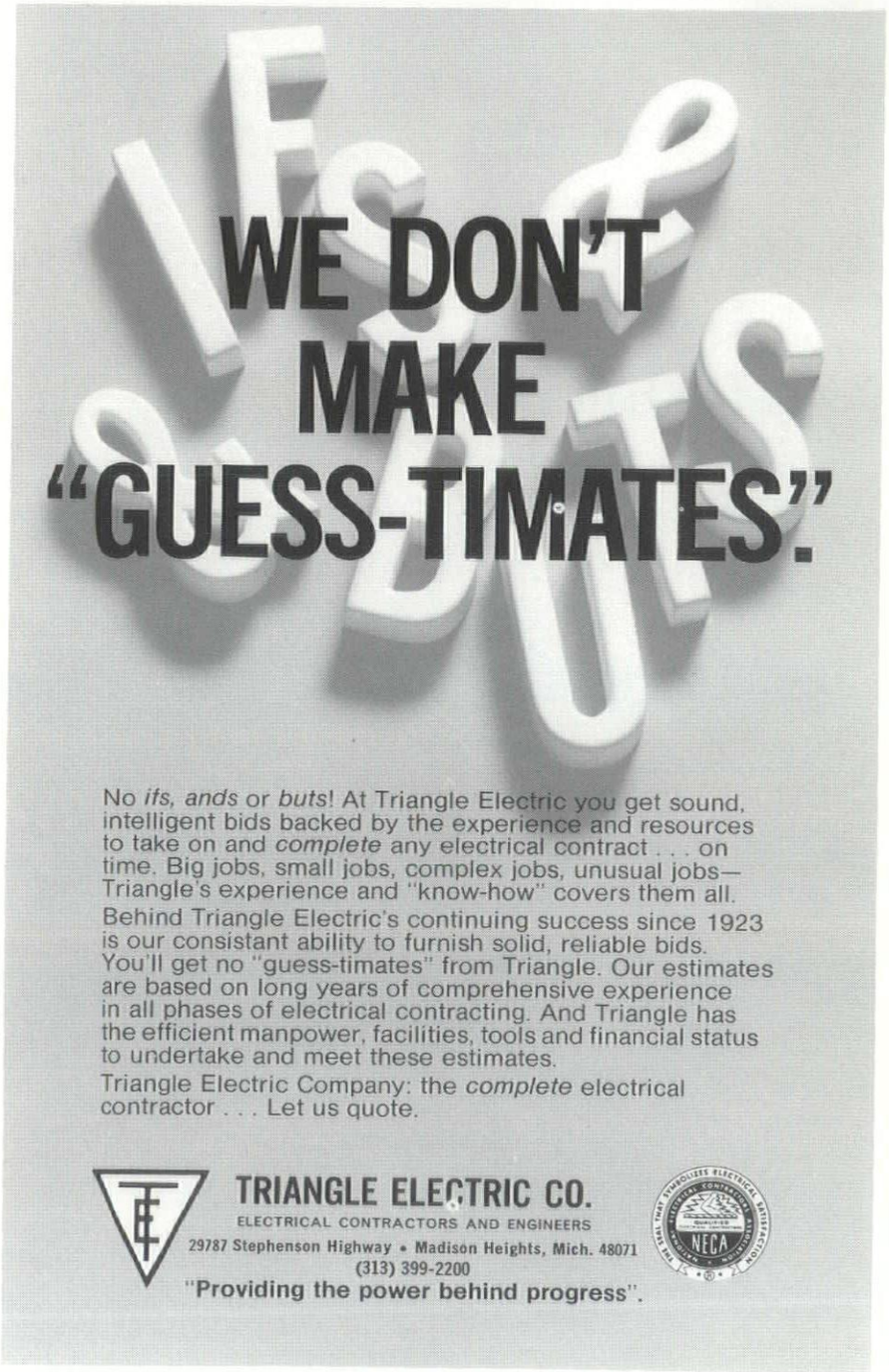
Detroit Engineers Set Up Community Action Program

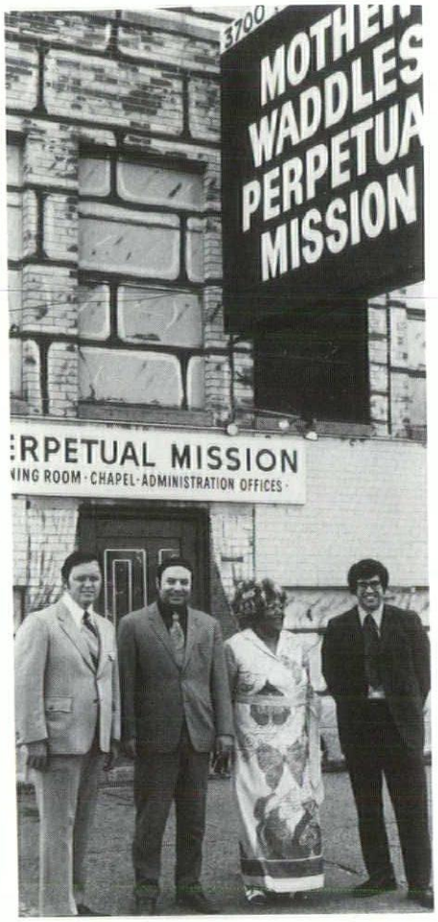
The renovation of Mother Waddles' Perpetual Mission at 3700 Gratiot, Detroit, has been selected by the Detroit Chapter of the Michigan Society of Professional Engineers as a Community Action Program (CAP) and is part of a national public affairs leadership program for engineers sponsored by the National Society of Professional Engineers.

The local Detroit Chapter is one of only 16 chapters throughout the country named by NSPE from among more than 500 to participate in a nation-wide plan to bring professional engineers into more direct contact with social and environmental concerns within their local communities.

The renovation project is a joint venture of the Detroit Chapter and the School of Engineering and Architecture of the University of Detroit.

Mother Waddles' Perpetual Mission is a benevolent social concern providing aid and assistance to the poor and needy. Mother Waddles has been involved in this kind of work for nearly 17 years. Her





FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: W. Thomas Munsell, P.E. - Program Chairman and Secretary of the CAP Steering Committee, Detroit Chapter, Michigan Society of Professional Engineers (MSPE), Christopher P. Kittides, P.E. - President, Detroit Chapter, MSPE and Chairman of CAP Steering Committee, Reverend Mother Charlesetta Waddles, Dr. Warren J. Baker, P.E. - Director, Detroit Chapter MSPE and member CAP Steering Committee.

programs include a 35-cent lunch, medical aid, job training, employment assistance, religious guidance and other personal aids. Funds come only from the private sector of the community. Mother Waddles's building is an old four-story furniture factory in need of repair and renovation in order to sustain and improve current social and educational programs for the people in the area.

The engineers plan to assist in the coordination and preparation of a master plan for the existing building and help carry out renovation goals. University of Detroit senior class members will be involved in the development of the master plan and also offer guidelines for the various improvements to be made.

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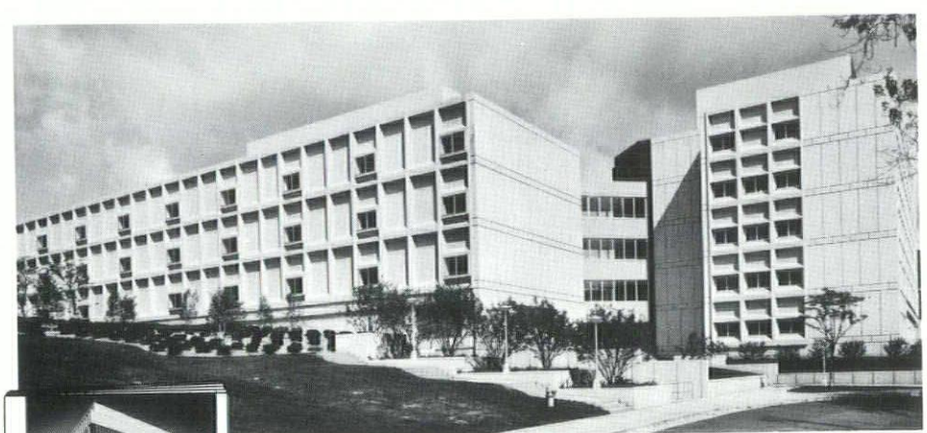

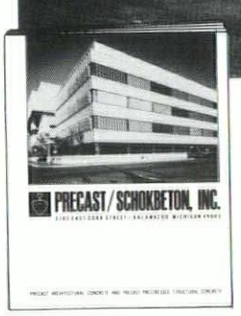

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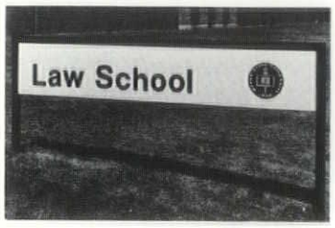

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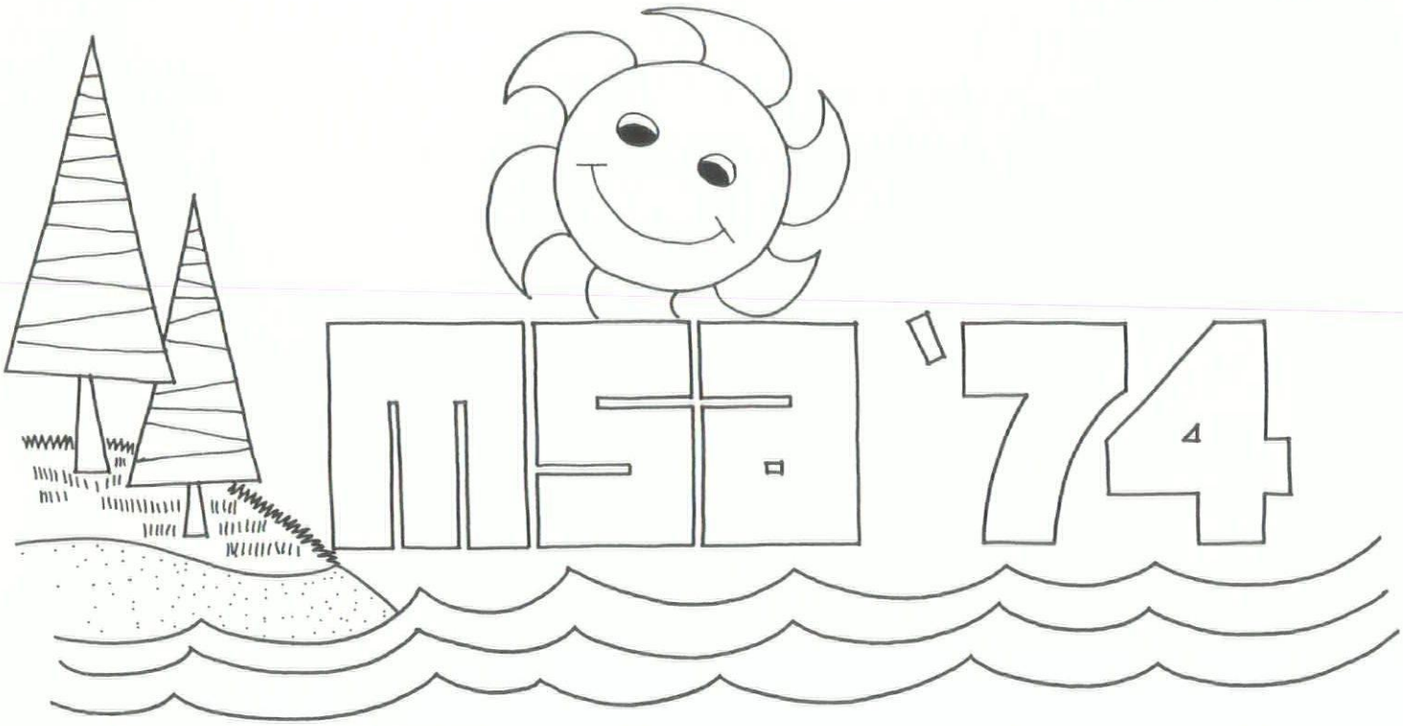

the architect and recreation
MSA 59TH ANNUAL CONVENTION

Program

Wednesday
March 13

8:00 A.M.-12:00 Noon
Exhibit Set-Up
Saginaw Civic Center

12:00 Noon-4:00 P.M.
Exhibitor Registration Only
Saginaw Civic Center

9:00 A.M.-4:00 P.M.
Member Registration Only
Bay Valley Inn

3:00 P.M.-4:30 P.M.
MSA Business Meeting
Bay Valley Inn

4:30 P.M.-6:00 P.M.
Bus Shuttle Service Begins
Bay Valley to Civic Center

5:00 P.M.-6:00 P.M.
Judging of Exhibits
Saginaw Civic Center

5:00 P.M.-10:00 P.M.
Ground Breaker
Exhibits, Buffet Dinner, Cocktails, Entertainment, Dancing & Prize Drawings
Saginaw Civic Center

9:30 P.M.-10:30 P.M.
Shuttle Bus Service
Saginaw Civic Center to Bay Valley

Thursday
March 14

8:00 A.M.-9:00 A.M.
Shuttle Bus Service
Bay Valley to Civic Center

8:00 A.M.-2:00 P.M.
Registration Members & Exhibitors
Saginaw Civic Center

9:00 A.M.-11:30 A.M.
The Architect & Recreation SEMINAR
Saginaw Civic Center

11:30 A.M.-2:00 P.M.
Exhibitor Buffet Luncheon, Exhibits, Cocktails & Prize Drawings
Saginaw Civic Center

2:00 P.M.
Exhibit Hall Closed
Drawings

2:00 P.M.-3:00 P.M.
Shuttle Bus Service
Civic Center to Bay Valley

3:00 P.M.-4:30 P.M.
The Architect & Recreation SEMINAR
Bay City

5:30 P.M.-11:00 P.M.
Host Chapter Party
Buses from Bay Valley to The Midland Center for the Performing Arts
Tour of the Midland Center
Cocktails, Dinner, & Theatre Performance

Information For Exhibitors

Art Craft Sign and Display Company will be the transfer and warehouse agent for the Convention and arrangements for scheduling and delivery should be made directly with them. Mr. Robert E. Rood, Manager, is the contact and he may be reached at (517) 485-2221.

Exhibits should not exceed a height of 8 feet on the back wall and no more than a height of 3 feet on partition between exhibits.

Exhibits are to be open by noon of Wednesday, March 13 (not manned until 5:00 P.M. on Wednesday) and may be dismantled after 2:00 P.M. on Friday, March 15.

We encourage exhibit designs to promote greater product interest. Questions may be directed to Gary Grout, Exhibit Chairman, Michigan Society of Architects, 28 West Adams, Detroit, Michigan 48226. Telephone: (313) 965-4100.

Exhibitors are invited to attend the professional seminars on Thursday and Friday, as well as any of the social events during the convention.

Winning exhibits will be awarded citations at the Banquet on Friday evening at Bay Valley Inn. Two complimentary banquet tickets will be given to the award winners exhibit. Tickets may be purchased at the MSA Registration Desk in the Convention Hall for all events.

Friday
March 15

8:00 A.M.-9:00 A.M.
Bus Shuttle Service
Bay Valley to Saginaw Civic Center

8:00 A.M.-2:00 P.M.
Registration for Members & Exhibitors
Saginaw Civic Center

9:00 A.M.-11:30 A.M.
The Architect & Recreation SEMINAR
Saginaw Civic Center

11:30 A.M.-2:00 P.M.
Exhibitor Buffet Luncheon
Exhibits, Cocktails & Prize Drawings
Saginaw Civic Center

2:00 P.M.-3:00 P.M.
Bus Shuttle Service
Civic Center to Bay Valley

3:00 P.M.-5:00 P.M.
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7:00 P.M.-8:00 P.M.
President's Reception
Bay Valley

8:00 P.M.
MSA Annual Honor Awards Banquet
Bay Valley

Floor Plan

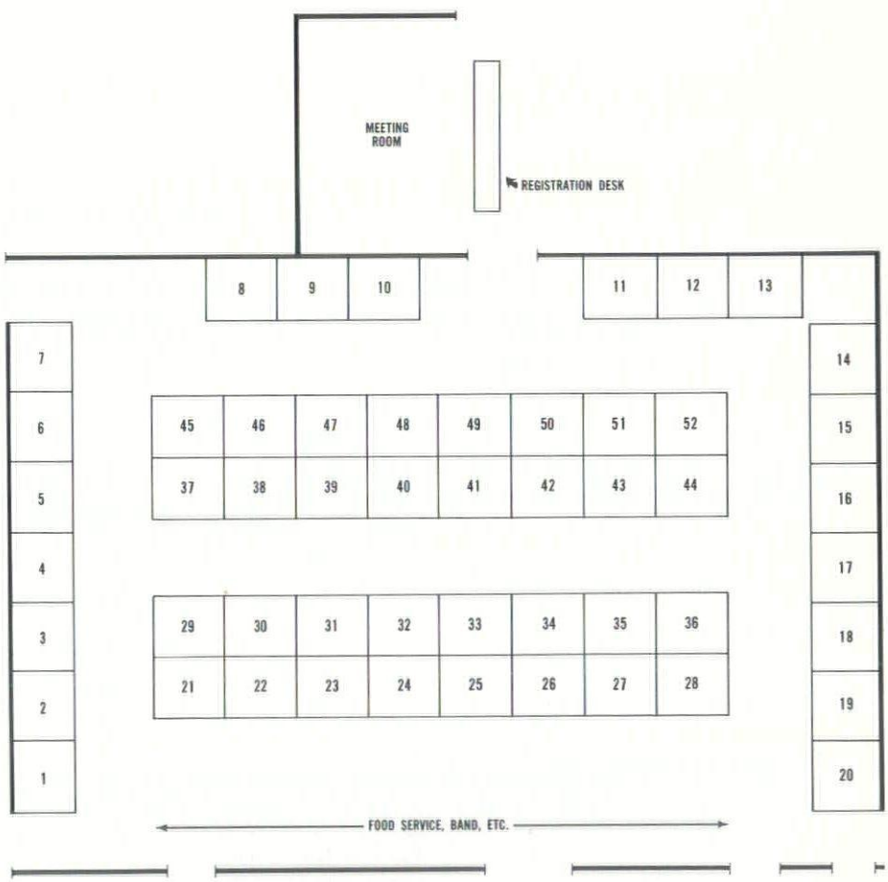

Exhibit Space Price List

All Exhibit Booths are 10′ x 8′

$500.00

Letters

Ann Stacy
Ann:

Please accept my long-distance applause for your two fine Chapter publications: Monthly Bulletin and Bulletin/Newsletter. The format, graphics and typography are excellent and I hope that our Chapter publications can develop into something half as good.

I have given the September issue of the Newsletter to Dave Taylor, Editor of Alaska Architect (the successor to Etcetera) for his admiration and stimulation, I was careful to make a photocopy first because the info and ideas need to be saved and used.

The article on the Michigan Zoo in the August issue of the Monthly Bulletin was great professional coverage. The graphics were especially good. I was intrigued by the last sentence on page 11: "In the interim, fund raising efforts are limited to the sale of posters". I assume that the graphics were from these posters. If so, would you please let me know how I can get more Information on these posters?

Earl Fullingim, AIA
President
Alaska Chapter, AIA

Dear Ann:

Thanks for sending a extra copy of your last Bulletin. I do congratulate you on an excellent issue. I forwarded a copy to one of our members who is currently designing a new zoo for North Carolina. I'm sure he will find the material interesting.

Betty W. Silver, Hon. AIA
Executive Director
North Carolina Chapter, AIA

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Architects: Rapidly growing, design oriented firm is seeking architects for top level positions. Aplicants should be registered with a minimum of 5 years experience in the commercial, and residential field. Excellent opportunity for responsibility, advancement. Send resume to Box 2214, Michigan Society of Architects, 28 West Adams, Detroit, Michigan 48226.

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Advertisers Index

Beldon Brick CIV

Consumers Power Company ... 2

Detroit Roofing Inspection Service 13

Eisen, Robert A. 13

Glanz & Killian 8

Great Lakes Fabricators and Erectors CIII

Herbert Jennings 10

Plumbing & Heating Industry of Detroit CII-1

Precast/Schokbeton 12

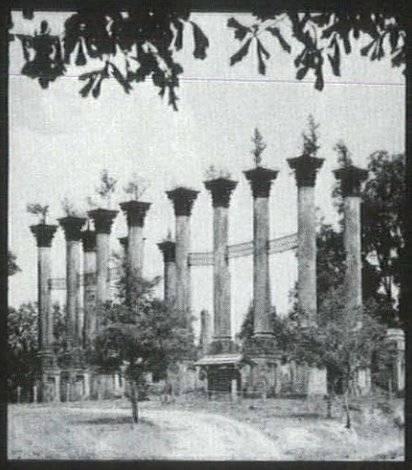
Roofing Industry Promotion Fund 13

Supersine 13

Triangle Electric Company 11

Turner Brooks 13

Windsor is dead.



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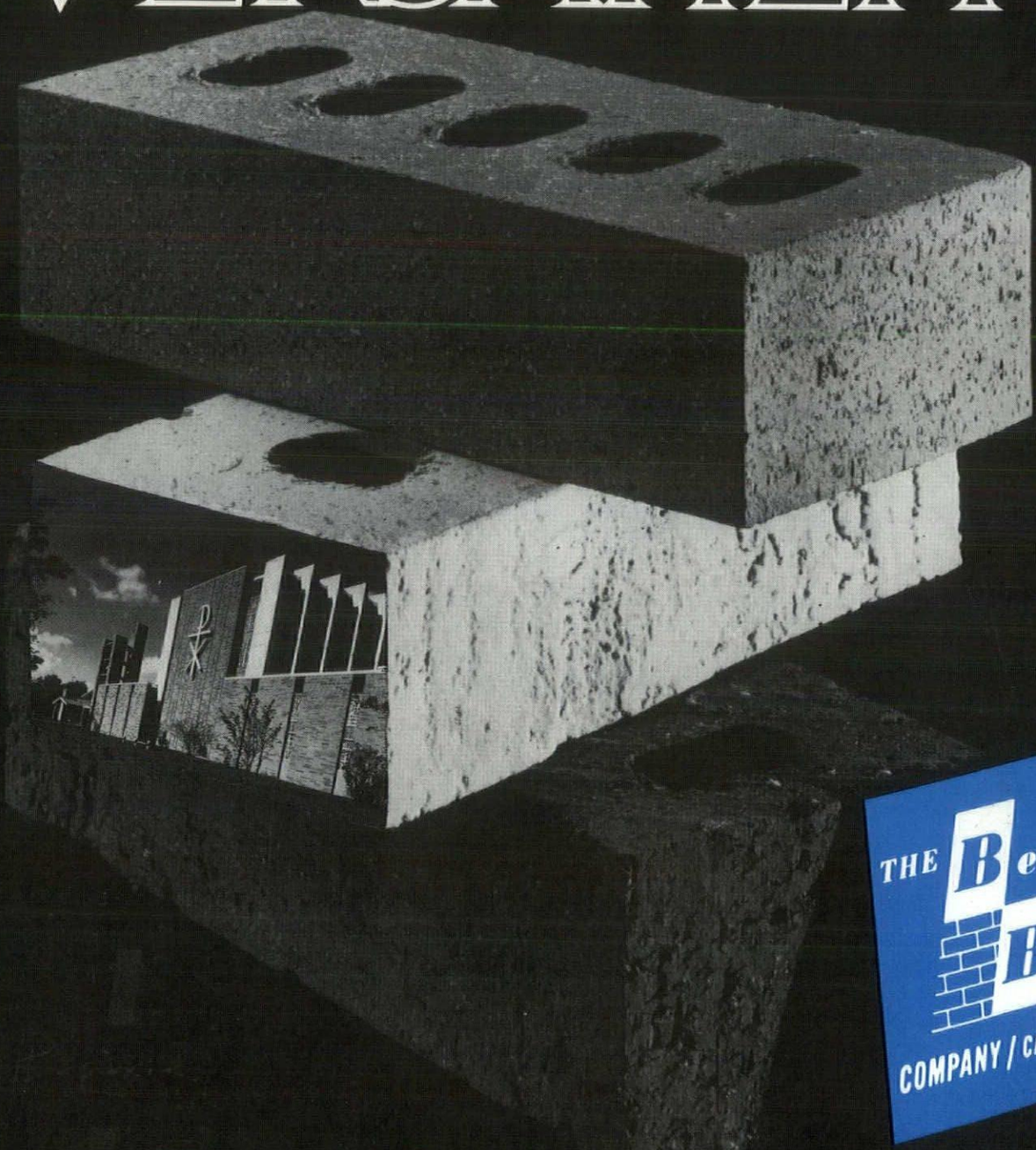

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